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ABSTRACT

A study was done to determine whether administrator salaries in 14 Ohio school districts were a reflection of administrator responsibilities or of length of service, and to find what factors accounted for salary differentials. Although previous research suggests factors for assigning value to administrative positions, traditional salary structures are generally continued, resulting in unequal salaries. The Position Description Questionnaire gathered data from 293 administrators in the following areas: accountability and impact of decision making; responsibilities for students, staff, and budget; percentage of decisions cleared with the superior; knowledge and experience; public involvement; and demography. The questionnaire was revised, tested on 54 administrators of the instigating district, and given to the administrators of the other 13 districts. The results revealed that (1) daily salaries did not significantly differentiate between administrator salaries; (2) personal background, professional background characteristics, and characteristics of the present position accounted for the variations in salary; and (3) gender was an important determinant of salary. A school district's compensation program should reflect what is valued about each position; unequal salaries based on gender should be avoided; and future adjustments in salary structure should show a concern for equity. (RG)

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ADMINISTRATIVE COMPENSATION: AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS ACCOUNTING FOR SALARY DIFFERENTIALS

A paper to be presented to the
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Initial consultation for the formulation of this study was conducted with Robert O. Spaulding of R. O. Spaulding and Associates. Adaptation of his Administrative Rating Plan provided the basis for the survey instrument used in the study. However, due to his untimely death, he was unable to review this adaptation nor further participate in the project. The researchers would like to acknowledge his contributions in the formulation of the study. We believe the resulting work represents a faithful execution of his ideas and a continuation of his own work.

Administrator Compensation: An Investigation of Factors Accounting for Salary Differentials

School administrators' salaries most often are found to be based on the length of service to the school district and to the amount of formal education completed (Caldwell, 1986). While level of responsibility usually influences salary, simple tenure in a postion may be a more powerful force in salary determination. When these factors are coupled with the tendency of school districts to place negotiation of administrators' salaries after that of teachers and tied to teacher salary changes, there seems to be little impetus for having salaries reflect the varying administrator responsibilities.

The purpse of this study was to determine if the salary schedules for administrators in fourteen northeast Ohio school districts place administrator positions in a justifiable relationship with each other and reflect the responsibilities associated with the various positions. Or, as implied by the literature, are salaries in northeast Ohio simply a function of years of service? Specifically, this study attempts to determine what factors account for the variation in salaries for similar administrative positions between school districts.

The present study was initiated due to the concern of one school district that its administrator salaries did not accurately reflect the relationships and responsibilities of the positions in the district. This district wanted to not only examine its own salary structure but also to identify the salary

structures of a number of its neighboring districts to formulate both internal and external comparisons. Thirteen additional school districts, all members of a professional development consortium, indicated the desire to participate in the study to investigate their own salary structures in relation to the other school districts.

This paper presents the results of that study. A total of 293 administrators provided detailed information on eight areas pertaining to their jobs. These areas include:
1) accountability/impact of decision making, 2) areas of decision making, 3) knowledge and experience, 4) responsibility for students, 5) responsibility for staff, 6) percentage of decisions cleared with superior, 7) public involvement, and 8) budget responsibilities. In addition, detailed position descriptions were collected on each of these administrative positions as a cross-check of the self reported data and as a means of determining the comparability of positions across school districts.

The paper will begin with a review of the literature pertinent to administrator compensation both the fields of education and business and industry. The procedures for the study will next be explained followed by a description of the research methodology and the results relative to the stated objective of the study. Finally, conclusions and implications for future research will be discussed.

Review of the Literature

Hill (1980) contends that the process of establishing fair and equitable pay practices is one of the most important activities carried out by an organization. The salary structre has a major impact on the organization's ability to recruit outstanding employees and to retain persons in positions. It also is a major factor in employee morale. Yet in spite of the significance of such pay decisions, he also states that we actually know very little about how judgments are made regarding pay rates and what factors are used when comparisons are made.

Understanding pay at the level of the organization is now getting increased attention (White, 1985). However, this attention is coming not from traditional management studies but from research in the social and economic fields. This more recent research has focused on women's employment and the position of disadvantaged groups in the pay structure, pointing to the discrepancies between suggested salary structure design factors and those found to actually relate to salaries. It has also created renewed emphasis on the comprehensive development of sound salary systems.

Several writers in the field of educational personnel administration state that administrator salary structures should consider role responsibilities as a critical differentiator between salaries (Caldwell, 1986; Castetter, 1981; Beatty and Schneier, 1981; Herman, 1977). Swartz reports a study by one school district to identify those factors of responsibility

specific to each of the various administrative positions. From an initial 47 factors, twelve were identified which differentiated between and among positions. These factors included budget organization, program implementation, program evaluation, direct and indirect supervision of staff, responsibility for the amount of budget in non-fixed categories, approval for expenditures, hiring and terminating employees, establishing priorities for the direction of program, program/system design, responsibility for preparation and submittal of reports and responsibility for a program that involves outside agencies. Both by self-report and group critique, these factors were found to be inequally distributed across positions.

Spaulding (1974, 1975, 1983, 1985) utilized similar factors in his analysis and design of administrator salary structures. Factors relating to responsibility are grouped into the general categories of responsibility for students, staff, budget, public relations and program. Subdivisions of these categories then investigate specific responsibilities such as hiring and terminating staff. He also was concerned with areas directly affected by the administrator's decisions, the percentage of decisions that must be cleared with the superior and the position of the superior to whom the administrator reports.

Studying determinants of executive compensation in the life insurance industry, Agarwal (1981) viewed compensation as a function of three factors - job complexity, employer's ability to pay and executive human capital. Job complexity refers to the nature of responsibility vested in the job. Characteristics such

as span of control and number of management positions supervised represent this function. Ability to pay is equated with total profit and rate of return. An equivalent concept in an educational organization might be property tax level and per pupil state apportionment. Thirdly, human capital is measured by educational level and work experience. the results of the Agarwal study find that significant factors in predicting executive compensation are span of control, management levels, company profit, and work experience.

A similar study by Gomez-Mejia et. al. (1985) concludes that managerial activities do vary significantly by function and level but that some factors are much more important than others in terms of the organization's reward system. The factors most rewarded in the corporation in this study are long range planning and coordination and consultation functions.

Using the data from the Current Population Surveys, Rytima (1982) reports that tenure in the occupation is the strongest predictor of salary among the variables of race, education, and personal characteristics when gender is entered as a factor. Another factor not included in the previous discussion is offered by Fossum and Fitch (1985). When asked what factors <u>should</u> be associated with salary increases, a majority of respondents stated performance as well as the nature of the job, training and experience.

And yet, even with the vast literature on factors identified as appropriate for differentiating between adminstrative positions and salaries, school administrators' salaries seem to

remain tied to the traditional factors of previous year's salary, cost of living, teacher's salaries and the local economic condition (Caldwell, 1986). As was found in the present study, the perdiem salary for an administrator is frequently less than that of the teacher he or she supervises. The increased responsibility of the administrative position is often merely compensated by increased pay for additional days worked. This finding is not dissimilar to some of the inequities between managerial salaries detected in the aforementioned studies of business and industry. Why, then, do administrators not recognize the inequities and seek to change the compensation system?

Three views of an individual's determination of pay comparison are presented by Hill (1980). He states that the literature supports the idea that a person uses an internal comparison standard to establish economic worth, i.e. If my actual pay agrees with my sense of worth, that pay is fair. A second referent for pay comparisons is the external market - what is the position worth in other organizations. This does not usually remain a salient referent for long, however, because persons tend to quickly lose touch with the external marketplace after employemnt and limit their comparisons simply to the job above or below them in the organization.

The third pay referent is an historical standard - what is my salary now in relation to past record of pay? Have I achieved the level that was promised by the organization? These referents suggest that as long as administrators feel that they have advanced in salary and have satisfied their need for

economic worth, little call for review or revision of even an inequitable salary structure will exist. Thus, these referents may actually perpetuate the system of salary increase for longevity on the job rather than provide impetus for reform based on responsibilities and performance.

Research on salary structures, including the present study, do point out that inequities in the compensation systems exist. Responsibility may not be recognized and rewarded between positions. A factor such as gender can significantly account for variation in salary for the same position within an organization (Pounder, 1985). Such findings support Foster's recommendation (1985) that companies (or school systems) conduct periodic audits of their overall competitive compensation practices.

With the factors associated with administrator compensation in mind, let us now turn to how equitable salary structures can be designed. In developing salary structures for school administrators, Kienapfel (1981) lists three steps needed in the process - the differentiation of positions based on established criteria, creation of an index on which to base salary, and development of salary ranges for each position in the organization.

The first step of the process, that of differentiating between positions by creating some type of ranking is generally referred to as the process of job evaluation (McMillan and Williams, 1982). Informal job evaluation is often carried out based on top managements' overall impression of job responsibility. These impressions may be more heavily influenced

by the incumbent in the position than by the actual responsibilities assigned the role. Such an informal evaluation can also encourage a political rather than performance orientation on the part of employees (McMillan and Williams, 1982). The school district initiating the present study had similar concerns due to the historic informal nature of job evaluation in the district.

On the other hand, formal job evaluation begins with a careful analysis of job responsibilities and results in a systematic ordering of salary ranges and clear communication to employees of how pay is determined. A variety of approaches are available for conducting formal job evaluations. Those most useful and often used by school districts are the survey methods, point-factor methods and maturity method. Each of these methods can be used in conjunction with one or more of the others.

The survey method relies on the pricing of jobs based on the average salaries for similar positions being paid by other employers (McMillan and Williams, 1982). By the use of multiple regression techniques, the rankings can reflect multiple measures of job value. This method has the advantage of keeping salaries competitive with external sources in an effort to retain employees in the organization. If used as the only method of job evaluation, the disadvantages may outweigh the advantages. It becomes extremely difficult to accurately compare salaries between organizations unless very sophisticated surveys are conducted. However, surveys used in education tend to only collect basic salary data and data such as student enrollment and per pupil expenditures (Robinson and Brown, 1986; Robinson and

Estep, 1985).

The point-factor method relies on selecting factors relative to the position and assigning them specific values. For example, education may be broken down into high school, associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctorate. Each level is then assigned a set of number points (Ellig, 1980). This process is repeated for each of the significant factors of the job with the ultimate value of the position among the others evaluated determined by the sum of all of the points awarded to the job (McConomy and Ganschinietz, 1983). Since this process is applicable to all jobs within an organization, it is the most prevalent method in use. Jones et al. (1982) suggest that the narrative job description can serve to provide the basis for identifying the factors to be analyzed. The more traditional sources of job analysis data for this method have been the incumbent, the immediate supervisor and trained analysts (Jones et al., 1982).

The maturity method relies on establishing worth based on years of experience. As this study shows, the maturity method appears to be the dominant approach for evaluating administrative positions in education. Usually, this approach is used for occupations where it is difficult to separate jobs, and value is assumed to be a function of experience (Ellig, 1980). And though the maturity method may, in fact, be by far the easiest to implement, it can result in some crucial inequities over time where top administrators earn far less than their older subordinates or where gender and race are factors significantly

related to salary level (Rytima, 1982).

Once job evaluation has taken place, the last two steps in salary structure development follow. A salary index is created based on the ranking of positions and ranges are developed for each position. The actual index and ranges created will reflect a combination of market pressures, present salary structure, and the organizational value ascribed to the various positions.

Overall, the literature suggests a number of factors appropriate for assigning value to administrative positions. It also points out that in many busineses, including education, this information has not been well utilized. Traditional, less well conceptualized approaches to salary structure design have been perpetuated resulting in inequities in the salary systems. Hill states that organizations must be concerned that their compensation systems are both internally (within the organization) and externally (within the marketplace) equitable if employees are to feel fairly treated (Hill, 1980). Salary structures cannot and should not be radically altered overnight. But through consultation, negotiation and continuing communication, salary systems can be re-shaped with resulting employee acceptability. The fact remains that the salary system is one of the most important aids for getting the best out of pay (White, 1985) and as such, should be constantly evaluated.

Design of the Study

As previously mentioned, this study was initiated by one school district's concern for inequities in its administrator salary structure. After consultation with R. O. Spaulding and a review of the literature related to salary structure evaluation and design, a number of factors for job evaluation were proposed to the school district. These factors, identified in the beginning of this paper, are: 1)accountability/impact of decisions, 2) areas of decision making, 3) knowledge and experience, 4) responsibility for students, 5) responsibility for staff, 6) relationship of position to other positions, 7) public involvement and 8) budget responsibilities. The Position Description Questionnaire was designed to collect data on these eight areas. Each area was further broken down. For example, public involvement was divided into sub-categories such as public speaking, outside meetings, contact with public officials, etc. Respondents were requested to indicate the amount of such involvement on a continuum from extensive to occasional or none. Additional demographic data were collected such as age and gender. As suggested by Pounder (1985), experience data were gathered on tenure in the position, experience as an administrator, and experience in education.

The initial version of the Position Description Questionnaire was reviewed by both school administrators and by university research faculty in order to evaluate the content validity and the clarity of wording and ease of administration.

These reviews resulted in minor revisions of the instrument.

The questionnaire was individually administered to the fifty four administrators of the initiating district by the researchers. Time was allowed for discussion of the position in relation to the factors on the questionnaire. Through this individual administration of the instrument and feedback, it was determined that the questionnaire not only was appropriate for all types of administrative positions but that the factors included did relate to each position and also differentiated between positions.

The next step was the administering of the questionnaire to the administrators of the thirteen additional school districts. The districts ranged in size from 2,000 to 12,000 students. All were suburban districts varying from contiguous boundaries with the city to contiguous boundaries rural. Questionnaires were distributed to each administrator and collected by the researchers from a central location in each district. The position desciptions for all administrative positions in each of the fourteen school districts were also collected.

Since it was imperative to be able to compare salaries across districts, every position title was listed. Some positions were rather easily determined to be comparable. For example, the position of business manager was found to vary little between districts as was also true for elementary principal. Other positions, however, were not easily matched. Central office directors, assistant superintendents, and coordinators were found to frequently have similar titles but very different position descriptions. At this point, the position

descriptions were reviewed to determine the comparability of positions. Responsibilities, line or staff administrator, and person reported to became criteria for matching positions. Each position was then coded with two codes - one for position level (such as assistant superintendent) and the second code for major area of responsibility such as personnel, curriculum, etc.

The data were analyzed through a series of statistical procedures. Initial correlation coefficients were determined for all of the variables in relation to salary. From these analyses, variables that appeared to show possible co-variation with administrator's salaries were analyzed via several stepwise multiple regressions. Lastly, the residuals of the regressions were generated and compared to determine the factor or factors which most accounted for the divergence from the best-fit regression model.

Findings

This investigation explored the relationships between and among a number of variables as they related to the salaries of school adminstrators in fourteen school districts. Administrators' annual salaries ranged from a high of $68,500 to a low of $14,910 with a mean salary of $40,615. Perdiem salary figures were determined but found not to significantly differentiate between administrators' salaries. The perdiem figures were important, however, when comparison were made to teachers' salaries, an aspect of the investigation beyond the scope of the findings reported here.

The primary thrust of this research was to identify those

variables, alone and in concert, that accounted for the observed variation in administrators' salaries. Possible correlates of administrators' salaries included the following variables:

Personal background of subjects

- Gender
- Age

Professional background characteristics of subjects

- Education (highest grade level or degree)
- Years in education
- Years in educational administration
- Years in present position

Characteristics of the present position

- Position title and main area of responsibility
- Number of students supervised
- Number of staff supervised
- Areas of decision making
- Impact of decision making
- Degree of public involvement
- Budget responsibilities
- Percentage of decisions cleared with superior

Initial analyses were directed toward identifying the characteristics of subjects on which sufficient variation existed to warrant possible co-variation with administrators' salaries. Not surprisingly, several characteristics of administrators were dropped from further analyses due to insufficient variation. These included:

Educational level (74% of respondents had Masters' degrees plus some additional graduate coursework).

Number of areas of decision making related to students (All respondents indicated either no direct responsibility related to students, 93%, or total direct responsibility for students, 7%.

Degree of public involvement (81% of the respondents indicated occasional to moderate public involvement).

The interdependency of the variables was determined by computing correlations. These interdependencies are easily identified in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

Several stepwise multiple regressions were then computed to determine the significance (and order of importance) of the subject characteristics as they related to subjects' annual salaries. The first regression computed included the following variables as possible predictors of salary: 1) years in present position, 2) years in administration, 3) years in education, 4)number of students supervised, 5) number of staff supervised, 6) age, 7) total budget, 8) percent of decision cleared with superior.

This analysis indicated that three characteristics represented the best statistical model for explaining subjects' observed variations in salaries. Table 2 below presents the summary of this regression.

Insert Table 2 here

The regression model described in Table 1 presents an overall perspective that seems quite logical based on the literature. Administrators' salaries reflect the person's years in administration, total size of staff supervised, and total years in the present position. The fairness of this model becomes questionable, however, when the gender of administrators is entered into the analyses. As might be expected, gender accounts for a significant variation in salary when it is introduced into the regression equation first (Multiple R =

subjects and variables such as total years in administration are so highly interrelated. Of concern, however, is the fact that gender also accounts for significant variation in administrators' salaries <u>even after years in administration, size of staff supervised, and years in the present position are included in the analysis</u> (See Table 4). Said differently, gender is still an important determinant of salary, even controlling for the professional background of the school administrators.

Insert Table 3 here

Insert Table 4 here

To further explore the relationship between gender and school administrators' salaries, the regression model described

in Table 3 was re-run generating a subsequent table of residuals. The residuals reflect a specific degree of divergence of each subject from the best-fit model computed by the multiple regression. These residuals ranged from a low of -$14,800 to a high of $9,362. The amounts indicate the degree of underpayment or overpayment of salary received by individuals (as opposed to the salary predicted by the multiple regression equation including years of experience, size of staff, and years in the present position. The salary residuals were then compared for male and female administrators yielding a startling picture. The average male earns $755 more than would be predicted by the model. In contrast, the average female earns $2,431 less than would be predicted by the model which included professional background characteristics and characteristics of the present position!

Conclusions and Implications

Even though the literature repeatedly states that administrator salaries should reflect the varied responsibilities and other characteristics of the job, this study clearly shows that for these fourteen school districts, the personal and professional characteristics of the incumbents in the positions are the strongest determinants of salary. Of the variables related to job responsibilities, only size of staff supervised was found to be a predictor of salary. Such disparity between the literature and practice suggests that school districts need to continuously evaluate their salary structures to determine if the structures reflect what the district chooses to value regarding each administrative position. While it might be assumed that the districts involved in this study intended for

salaries to be based more on experience than specific job characteristics, several of the districts specifically chose to participate in the study because of a concern that salaries might not both reflect the characteristics of the job as well as the characteristics of the incumbent.

Recognition of the need to evaluate existing salary structures pre-supposes that the school district decide what is valued about each administrative position. As discussed in the literature on salary structure design, positions must be ranked based on some pre-determined criteria that reflects the values of the district. Once such a ranking has occurred, districts must then decide how those values are to be reflected in the compensation program. When such evaluation does not regularly occur, the results can be like those found in this study where years of incremental salary increases result in a system driven by longevity rather than responsibility.

Inattention to the salary structure can also result in inequities for specific segments of the administrator population. This study dramatically points out the inequities that exist for females in the administrator population studied here. Even when the other variables found to predict salary variation are accounted for, gender still accounts for significant variation in salary.

Such salary variation due to gender is more than just an ethical issue with which school districts must deal. This finding also points to a potential future exodus of qualified women from school administration positions. Traditionally, women have had a

difficult time accessing school administrator positions, particularly those in secondary education and top central office positions. When this fact is coupled with a male/female salary differential like the one found here and increasing access to positions outside of education, it may become increasingly difficult to attract and keep qualified women in leadership positions in the schools. The timing of this phenomena could also coincide with a large number of administrator vacancies due to retirement. The loss of this human potential would most certainly be to the detriment of the field of education.

In summary, two major areas of concern arise from the findings of this study. The first is that administrator salaries do not reflect those characteristics of the job repeatedly identified in the literature as significant differentiators of positions - characteristics such as job responsibilities, impact of decisions, etc. Rather, the personal and professional characteristics of the position holder are more potent. Secondly, great inequities in salary exist based on gender. This finding brings forth concern for both the ehtics of the existence of such inequities and concern for the potential waste of human talent that this inequity may predict.

There is a great need for further research on administrator salaries at a regional or national level. Although it was initially planned to compare the salaries and characteristics of individual job categories both between and within districts, the sample of the study was not large enough to make such analyses valid. A larger scale study could provide a sample sufficient for such comparisons.

In addition, most current large scale salary surveys of school administrator positions have not investigated the relationship between salary and characteristics of the position, They have tended to just look at characteristics of the school district (population, per pupil expenditure) and of the incumbents. Neither have they studied the salaries for multiple positions so that fairness of salaries between positions can be determined. Future studies need to include these variables.

School boards must understand that although adjustment of administrators' salary structures in never a simple task, perpetuation of the existing structures will only compound the inequities that presently exist. While the present study emphasizes where the problems lie, the next step is for school boards to address the problems through job evaluations and adjustments of existing salary structures. Future adjustments in salary structure need to reflect a concern for equity both internally and in comparison to positions outside the system. For only when administrator salary structures maintain internal and external integrity will administrators feel fairly treated, and the strongest leaders will be both attracted to and held in these vital educational leadership roles.

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Table 1

Correlations for Interdependent Variables

Variable	Years in Education	Years in Admin.	Years in Present Job	Salary	Age
Years in Education	1.000 p=***	.6652 p=0.00	.3936 p=0.00	.3471 p=0.00	.6049 p=0.00
Years in Admin.	.6652 p=0.00	1.000 p=***	.5323 p=0.00	.4413 p=0.00	.5883 p=0.00
Years in Present Job	.3936 p=0.00	.5323 p=0.00	1.000 p=***	.1589 p=0.00	.3627 p=0.00
Salary	.3471 p=0.00	.4413 p=0.00	.1589 p=0.00	1.000 p=***	.2577 p=0.00
Age	.6049 p=0.00	.5883 p=0.00	.3627 p=0.00	.2577 p=0.00	1.000 p=***

Table 2

Regression Summary

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	RSQ Change	F Value
No. of Staff Supervised	0.40205	0.16164	0.16164	28.862
Years in Education	0.51382	0.26401	0.10237	18.973
Years in Present Job	0.51426	0.26446	0.00045	0.113

Table 3

Regression Summary with Gender Entered First

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	RSQ Change	F Value
Gender	.43977	.19340	.19340	22.366
No. Staff Supervised	.55158	.30424	.11084	25.278
Years in Education	.58623	.34367	.03943	9.726
Years in Present Job	.58634	.34380	.00013	0.036

Table 4

Regression Summary with Gender Entered Last

Variable	Multiple R	R Square	RSQ Change	F Value
No. Staff Supervised	.40205	.16164	.16164	25.278
Years in Education	.51382	.26401	.10237	9.726
Years in Present Job	.51426	.26446	.00045	0.036
Gender	.58634	.34380	.07933	22.366